

## Diabetes Self-Management: Dealing with Low Blood Sugar

People with diabetes, especially those taking blood sugar lowering medications can experience hypoglycemia or low blood sugar (usually less than 70 mg/dl). Blood sugar may drop from delaying or skipping a meal, getting more exercise than usual, drinking alcohol and or taking too much medication.

It's important to know the signs. If left untreated, low blood sugar can cause seizures, loss of consciousness, and may even lead to death. Typical symptoms of low blood sugar include **shakiness, sweating, headache, hunger, dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, fatigue and confusion.** The symptoms and the level of blood sugar when they occur are different for each person with diabetes.

Eat 15 grams of a fast acting sugar if you test and find a low blood sugar. That is about

- 3 glucose tablets
- 3 packets or 1 tablespoon of sugar
- ½ cup of fruit juice or regular soda
- 5-6 pieces of hard candy

Wait 15 minutes after dosing and test your blood sugar. If it is still below 70 mg/dl, have another dose of 15 grams of sugar. Then retest. **If you are not able to test your blood sugar, but think you are experiencing low blood sugar, treat the reaction to be safe.** Glucagon is an injectable form of glucose. If the person with diabetes becomes unconscious and no Glucagon is available, call 911.

To prevent hypoglycemia, keep your blood sugar as close to normal as possible. Test your blood sugar often and look for patterns of highs and lows. Take your medications as prescribed. And, always wear your medical identification.

## Aiming for Healthier Lifestyles in 2007

If you made a New Year's resolution, it probably involved losing weight, becoming more physically active, quitting smoking or maybe checking your blood sugar more often. If you want to choose a healthier lifestyle in 2007, try some of these suggestions so that by the end of the month or the end of the year, your resolutions are not just a memory.



**Plan ahead.** Put time into your day for exercise, relaxation and eating a balanced meal. Create a menu at the beginning of each week so you won't have to settle for fast food while looking for your next meal. Take a walk during your breaks even if only 10 minutes at a time. Some studies have shown that a healthy diet and exercise may even reduce stress.

**Keep a food, exercise and weight diary.** Tracking your progress will help you to stick to the game plan. Set small, achievable goals. Try a pedometer to count the steps you take each day.

**Get help.** Talk to your health care provider and seek out the professionals that can provide guidance while you attempt to make a lifestyle change. Join a support group. Take advantage of the emotional support and shared experiences of others trying to make the same changes.

**Speak positively to yourself.** Recognize that behavior change is hard work. When you falter, reassure yourself, "I can do this" or "I do feel good when I exercise". Eliminate the words "can't" and "should" from your vocabulary. Expect that a setback may occur. It takes time and practice for changes to become automatic. Just pick up where you left off and forge ahead into a healthier 2007. Happy New Year!

**For additional information on support groups:**

- For diabetes self-management, contact the hospital nearest to you.
- For help with weight management, increasing physical activity and smoking cessation, call your local health department. Many offer classes and counseling.

**For medical identification:**

- Check your local pharmacy.
- Call the Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation at 202-298-9211 or go online to [www.diabeteswellness.net](http://www.diabeteswellness.net).
- Try [www.lifetag.com](http://www.lifetag.com)

**References:**

**Hypoglycemia**

“Hypoglycemia”. From the American Diabetes Association website. [www.diabetes.org/type-2-diabetes/hypoglycemia.jsp](http://www.diabetes.org/type-2-diabetes/hypoglycemia.jsp). December, 2006.

“What you need to know about the highs and lows.” Diabetes Guide. Rite Aid Pharmacy publication #2002. October, 2006.

**Changing behavior.**

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This educational support tool is a product of the Maryland Diabetes Prevention and Control Program. The intent is to provide information specific to diabetes self-management for the public, especially people with diabetes and their families.

\*\*If you would like to receive this tool each month, please send an email to the author, Daria Rovinski : [rovinskid@dhmh.state.md.us](mailto:rovinskid@dhmh.state.md.us)